

THE HEART OF DAVID

A FROM DESPAIR TO DELIVERANCE SERIES COMPILATION



Contents

The Most Important Task... 1

The Art of Bouncing Back... 3

Boldly Approaching God... 5

Being Still In The Lord... 8

Genuine Worship... 10

Serving Through Suffering... 13

Obedience That Hurts... 16

Turning Back the Darkness... 19

Using the Blessing You've Been
Given... 20

How Gentle Kings Become Killers...
22

What the Torah Taught David About
the Love of God... 25

David & Spiritual Maturity... 28

Author & Copyright... 30

Discovering David's Most Important Task as King

Years ago I was having dinner with a friend when she told me that she had Jewish blood in the family. My instant reaction was, "you are so lucky!" Why? Because I knew that the Jewish people were God's "chosen ones." Out of all the nations, the Lord chose Abraham and then his descendants, to be the Lord's holy, special people. I was a Christian, but I didn't have that same status and to me, it was a far greater privilege than merely being "grafted into the vine." [Ref. Romans 11]

As I am an adoptee, several years ago I had my DNA tested and I discovered, to my absolute delight, that my mother's side of the family is Jewish. Beyond my wildest dreams, I too, was a "chosen one." I am comforted by being connected to something so ancient and precious, but there was a point where I stopped and realised that being a "chosen one" isn't any more special than being a "grafted in" Christian. What my spirituality comes down to is that I belong to Jesus. He is all I have known for thirty-five years, and all I want. Nothing I have as a Jew is as precious as my relationship with Him.

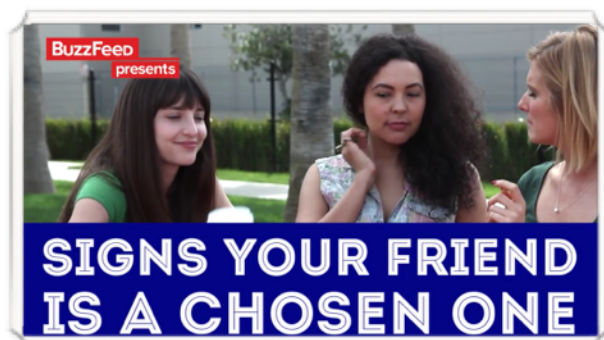
I fell down the rabbit hole of Youtube last week, and was watching a BuzzFeed **video on "11 Things Your Jewish Friends Just Get," when they flashed up an odd title graphic: "signs your friend is a chosen one." The social label surprised me as a statement made in Deuteronomy looked so out of place in the secular world. The surprise made me take the time to rethink about what it means to be a "chosen one."

In Understanding the ***Old Testament, Dr Paul House says: *"He has chosen Israel to be His people so that they might bless the other nations. They are not chosen so that they can have special privileges and do as they wish. They are chosen to minister to the rest of the world."* From that my mind went straight to this Scripture: *"When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more*

will be required." Luke 12:48b With status comes responsibilities, and looking at that verse in context reminded me of David.

In Luke 12, Jesus was talking about no one knowing when He will return and how we must be ready, but in verse 42, He makes a statement that also outlines the duties of a godly King. "A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing His other household servants and feeding them..." Regardless of David's status as King, he was God's servant. A quick search of "My servant, David" on Bible Hub brings up fifteen places where God has spoken of David that way. God never calls David by his worldly title. Whatever status Isra'el gave their Kings, the Great Master kept the office of King in perspective.

Dr House's words helped me to realise that David's chief role as King was to make God known, both to his people and also to the surrounding nations. Regardless of the national security needs of the nation, which laws needed reinforcing, what civil works needed to be completed, or what other diplomatic and administrative duties he had, first and foremost, as King he was the spiritual leader and had the responsibility of "managing [God's] other household servants and feeding them" the Word of God. A righteous, obedient King would keep Isra'el on the right track with God, so that He could bless His chosen people so much, the other nations would look at their success in envy, and want to know who their God was.



God blessed David to a degree that put him in the perfect place to be a witness to other nations. As Dr House's also said "...he has a capital city, he has military might, and there is a religious centre for Israelite worship. Each of these achievements helps make him the undisputed authority in the land. For now Israel's nagging long term problems of poor military, poor organisation and scattered religious rites have been solved. Because they have a good leader they follow Yahweh and defeat their enemies. No ruler since Joshua has done so much for the people." The other nations had to have seen this and wanted to know the secrets of such success.

"I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not hidden Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation."
Psalm 40:10

David's chief task was the same one that we all have as Christians: God blesses us so we know His love, saving power and grace, which we then pass onto others who are lost, or struggling. It doesn't matter whether you are a "chosen one" or not, we have all been blessed with much and much is expected.

Notes:

***"The LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honour; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your God, as He has spoken."*

Deuteronomy 26:18-19

****Buzzfeed Video Link:** <https://youtu.be/uNlcRwcNqos>

*****Understanding the Old Testament by Dr Paul House, biblicaltraining.org Available free from:** <https://www.biblicaltraining.org/understanding-old-testament/paul-house>



“But I Will Trust in You...” King David and the Art of Bouncing Back

*“...I praise the LORD for what He has promised.
I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?
I will fulfil my vows to You, O God,
and will offer a sacrifice of thanks for Your help.
For You have rescued me from death;
You have kept my feet from slipping.
So now I can walk in Your presence, O God,
in Your life-giving light.” Psalm 56:10-13*



When I was first getting to know David's full life story, I heard a Rabbi say that David had endured a very hard life. I have to agree. He left a life of obscurity to follow a promise from the Lord, but along the way suffered demotions, multiple assassination attempts, long-term separation from his first wife, many years in hiding fearing for his life, wars, the death of at least four of his sons, long-term serious health problems, three uprisings against his kingship, multiple persecutions because of his faith... plus all the usual popularity and approval issues, which go with being the leader of a nation.

Aside from those problems, he dealt with some of the most toxic forms of stress which are commonly considered to be killers. His sources of stress were:

- constant,
- unpredictable and
- uncontrollable.

That he died in old age, having cleared the nation of its enemies and having achieved so much for the Lord, is nothing short of a providential miracle.

Or could there be more to it than that?

When the Psalms are being dissected and preached about, there is nearly always an admiring acknowledgement of David's ability to bounce back up while appearing to be sinking. Here is another example.

*“For the choir director: A psalm of David.
O LORD, how long will You forget me? Forever?
How long will You look the other way?
How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul,
with sorrow in my heart every day?
How long will my enemy have the upper hand?
Turn and answer me, O LORD my God!
Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I will die.
Don't let my enemies gloat, saying, “We have defeated him!”
Don't let them rejoice at my downfall.
But I trust in Your unfailing love.
I will rejoice because You have rescued me.
I will sing to the LORD
because He is good to me.” Psalm 13*

David pushes himself from despair to hope in a manner which has been said to appear bipolar. He isn't bipolar in any respect. David knew how to pump up his morale. He did it by reflecting on

his past victories and by trusting the Lord, through prayer and praise. David also constantly turned to the Lord for direction, comfort and grounding and despite persecution from his own people over his unrelenting faith in God, he publicly praised the Lord and pointed the hearts of the people towards Him. He is inspirational.

As psychology has grown, researchers have spent more and more time looking at the positive aspects of human behaviour, rather than staying focussed on what can go wrong. Their findings help explain why David was able to keep his head above water, despite the forces that worked against him. In 2006 Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun studied post traumatic growth, which is exactly what David experienced many times. This growth results in a positive attribute termed resilience.

Resilience is when you fall down, but get up, and are able to do that repeatedly, becoming stronger each time you arise. It means expecting positive outcomes, despite the risks and stresses that come your way. It involves an ability to adapt when you just have to make the best of a tough situation and clinging onto your purpose in life.



Tedeschi and Calhoun's work beautifully describes how resilience is enabled. While at first people may show high stress signs and be depressed or overwhelmed by what they have been through, in time they can grow to come through with:

- ✦ *"Increased perception of competence and self-reliance.*
- ✦ *Enhanced acceptance of one's vulnerability and negative emotional experiences.*
- ✦ *Improved relationships with significant others.*
- ✦ *Increased compassion and empathy for others.*
- ✦ *Greater efforts directed at improving relationships.*
- ✦ *Increased appreciation of own existence.*
- ✦ *Greater appreciation for life.*
- ✦ *Positive changes in one's priorities.*
- ✦ *Stronger religious/spiritual beliefs.*
- ✦ *Greater personal intimacy with God.*
- ✦ *Greater sense of control and security through belief in God.*
- ✦ *Greater meaning about life and suffering through religion."*

If David was writing this, I am sure that he would emphasise the last four points, as he repeatedly did in the Psalms. It was faith that gave him the greatest lift; however, his own personality traits of perseverance, willingness to take action, empathy, teachability and bravery, also had an important impact on his resilience. The Lord moulds us like a potter moulds clay, but the process works better if the quality of the clay is good.

To be resilient, David also needed supportive people around him such as Samuel, Nathan, Hushai the Archite and Jonathan; and resilient role models. His mother is mentioned as a role

Study Resources

- Post Traumatic Growth: <http://www.posttraumaticgrowth.com>

- Kelly McGonigal: How to make stress your friend: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcGyVTAoXEU>

- Firdaus Dhabhar: The positive effects of stress: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsc83N-Q1q4>

- Post Traumatic Growth: Conceptual Foundations and Empirical Evidence: Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun [http://data.psych.udel.edu/abelcher/Shared%20Documents/3%20Psychopathology%20\(27\)/Tedeschi,%20Calhoun,%202004.pdf](http://data.psych.udel.edu/abelcher/Shared%20Documents/3%20Psychopathology%20(27)/Tedeschi,%20Calhoun,%202004.pdf)

- Resilience Videos on TED Talks: Search via https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=resilience+ted or enter "resilience TED" into search box.



Nearly all the Scripture quotations used are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, Copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 via Bible Hub.

<http://biblehub.com>

model in Psalms 116:16: *"Truly I am your servant, Lord; I serve you just as my mother did; you have freed me from my chains;"* and 86:16.

How David dealt with his mistakes was also a major factor in determining his success. A positive attitude to mistakes has been found to enable people to make better choices in the future, which in turn increases their overall happiness and ability to function in life. Belting yourself up with guilt only sends you backwards. David responded to corrections by Abigail and Nathan and was always able to get back up on his feet, no matter what hardship or grief hit him. [Refs. 1 Samuel 25 and 2 Samuel 12]

If you feel you are low on resilience, take heart. According to the research, resilience can be taught and role modelled. Studying David's life has certainly helped boost my resilience. I am inspired by his courage, gently rebuked by his righteous responses to stressful situations and comforted by his trust in the Lord. He is a blessing that has never stopped giving.



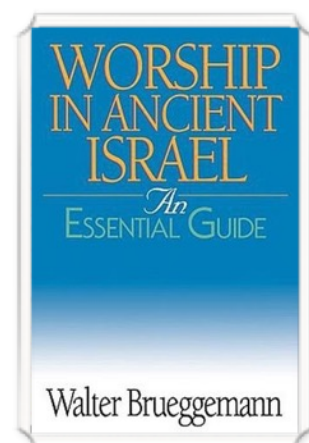
Boldly Approaching God: The Example of David

We are familiar with Hebrews 4:16: *"So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most;"* and Ephesians 3:12: *"Because of Christ and our faith in Him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence;"* but what you may not know, is that boldness before God isn't a New Testament privilege that arrived with Jesus.

This confident attitude in approaching God is evident in how David communicates with the Lord, and was also seen in Moses, Job and other Psalmists. It may look a little disrespectful sometimes, but it is a hallmark of a dynamic, covenant relationship with God.

*"I cried out to You, O LORD.
I begged the Lord for mercy, saying,
"What will You gain if I die,
if I sink into the grave?
Can my dust praise You?
Can it tell of Your faithfulness?
Hear me, LORD, and have mercy on me.
Help me, O LORD."* Psalm 30:8-10 (See also Psalm 44 by the Sons of Korah)

*"Then Job spoke again:
"My complaint today is still a bitter one,
and I try hard not to groan aloud.
If only I knew where to find God,
I would go to His court.
I would lay out my case
and present my arguments.
Then I would listen to His reply
and understand what He says to me.
Would He use his great power to argue with me?
No, He would give me a fair hearing.
Honest people can reason with Him,
so I would be forever acquitted by my judge." Job 23:1-7*



I didn't know about these ancient roots of boldness, until I read "Worship in Ancient Israel," by Walter Brueggemann. On page 46-47 he writes: *"Isra'el also engaged in truth telling about its life with YHWH in confession, lament and protest... Isra'el was not a submissive, second-rate player, but was a full, vigorous partner to YHWH with an unapologetic presence and an unembarrassed voice that refused to be silenced or cowed... Isra'el refuses to submit too readily to YHWH's sovereignty when that sovereignty was seen to be unfaithful; in such circumstances, Isra'el instead of submitting, made a claim for itself against YHWH."*

Page 49: "Such speech, in its rawness, is in fact an expression of great faith; it expresses deep conviction that when YHWH is mobilised in order to honour YHWH's covenantal commitments to Isra'el, YHWH has full capacity and power to right any situation or wrong. Thus the voice of protest and rage is characteristically in the service of plea and partition to YHWH."

I agree with Professor Brueggemann that calling God to action like this can seem irreverent. However, David is never rebuked by God for being too direct. For that matter, neither is Job. God could destroy Job for speaking out, but He doesn't. Instead, God is angry with Job's friends for not representing Him accurately, and then God restores double Job's losses. [Ref: Job 42:10] It seems that those without the faith to get in God's face and speak their mind lose, and those with the faith to be bold, win. Honesty with God obviously pays off.

*"Protect me! Rescue my life from them!
Do not let me be disgraced, for in You I take refuge.
May integrity and honesty protect me,
for I put my hope in You." Psalm 25:20-21*

Calling on God is submissive, rather than subversive. David could have taken his problems into his own hands and dealt with his enemies by the sword. Instead, he kicked a hole in God's door and got a better answer.

If you study the Psalms, you will find that his entreaties to God are also **tempered by praise** and a promise to make an offering to God when deliverance has been granted. God gets His due recognition, gratitude and with David, the testimony of what God had done is also shared among the people via a Psalm, to encourage them as well. David's brave, bold faith benefitted many people, including us today.

*"Declare me innocent, O God!
Defend me against these ungodly people.
Rescue me from these unjust liars..."
verse 4: "Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God—the source of all my joy.*

*I will praise You with my harp,
O God, my God!
Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?
I will put my hope in God!
I will praise Him again—
my Saviour and my God!"* Psalm 43:1 and 4-5

So are there limits to how bold we can be? Yes; the limits begin if we abuse the Lord, blame Him for our problems, or in short, cease to address Him with any attitude that doesn't demonstrate the *fruit of the Spirit. He is merciful and patient, but He is neither a scapegoat, nor a punching bag. Respect is absolutely always called for, in every situation.

There are times when like David, regardless of the trouble we are in and how urgent it is, we just have to wait patiently for an answer and keep hoping in the Lord. There are other times when due to complications, such as the effect of other's free will on our circumstances, God can't do as we ask, and we have to submit to His authority and wisdom, like it or not. Plus there are times when we're wrong. Our 'fix it' answer was a poor one. In all these conditions we need to adopt the humble attitude Job had when he said:

*"I know that You can do anything,
and no one can stop You.
You asked, 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?'
It is I—and I was talking about things I knew nothing about,
things far too wonderful for me."* Job 42:2-3

Despite how humbled he is, Job still has the courage to front up and reply to the Lord.

So the next time you're struggling, don't hesitate to be honest with God. He already knows every detail of your circumstances and feelings. so hiding what is really going on is impossible. The Lord has promised to **bless us with every spiritual blessing. We are ***beloved, treasured heirs with Christ, and He will always ****be on our side to help us through every trial and battle. Tell Him how you feel and ask for help... And don't stop asking and seeking Him. You're not crossing a line, you're building your faith and a better, active relationship with Him.

Notes:

"Worship in Ancient Israel: An Essential Guide," by Walter Brueggemann, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005. ISBN: 0-687-34336-4. (Academically, theologically worded and not easy to read for the average person, but if you can get through the wording it is a massive blessing. I learned so much which reflected on my relationship with the Lord and encouraged me.)

*The fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22-23

**Every spiritual blessing: Ephesians 1:3

***Beloved joint heirs: Romans 8:15-17

****By our side: Deuteronomy 31:8 and Hebrews 13:5

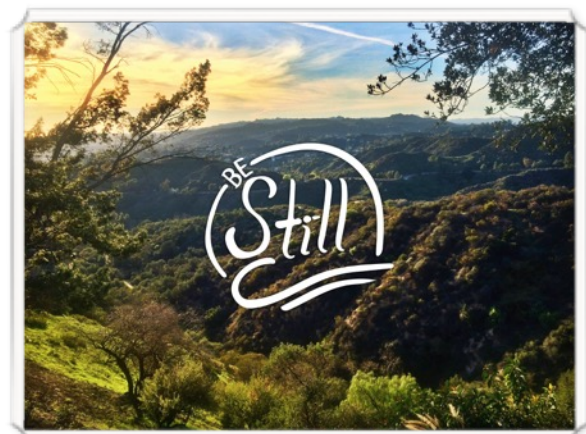


Moses and Boldness

Moses' honesty with God can be seen here: *"Moses heard all the families standing in the doorways of their tents whining, and the LORD became extremely angry. Moses was also very aggravated. And Moses said to the LORD, 'Why are you treating me, your servant, so harshly? Have mercy on me! What did I do to deserve the burden of all these people? Did I give birth to them? Did I bring them into the world? Why did you tell me to carry them in my arms like a mother carries a nursing baby? How can I carry them to the land you swore to give their ancestors? Where am I supposed to get meat for all these people? They keep whining to me, saying, 'Give us meat to eat!' I can't carry all these people by myself! The load is far too heavy! If this is how you intend to treat me, just go ahead and kill me. Do me a favour and spare me this misery!"* Numbers 11:10-15

Being Still In The Lord - For Those Who Prefer Action

*"God You can tell the waves 'be still'
Tell the ocean roar to pass
Lord until it does
I'll wait here...
And I will sing songs in the night
Praise in the storm – You're God it in all
And I will stand – I'll be still and know
Whatever may come, You're God in it all"
[*Source below.]*



Stillness is not my natural habitat. I like to get things done. I prefer neat, timely answers and something that I can actually, physically do, to get to wherever I need to go. So the idea of being still before the Lord and waiting for His reply, healing, or deliverance is not a comfortable one for me. I am more like the prophet Jeremiah when he said, *"My heart, my heart--I writhe in pain! My heart pounds within me! I cannot be still..."* Jeremiah 4:19a

But Scripture clearly says: *"The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."* Exodus 14:14 and in the sons of Korah's words: *"Be still and know that I am God!"* Psalm 46:10a

Stillness is a spiritual trait we are encouraged to pursue. Being still, means you are not controlling God, or your circumstances; you are stopping and allowing God to be in control. That will always bring the most perfect results, but it is oh, so very, very hard to do.

God won many battles for Isra'el. There were times when the people had to take up arms and fight with the Lord's active backing, but there were other times when they had to wait on God to do all the work. Nothing has changed. Being still with your focus remaining resolutely on the Lord, continues to be one of the most powerful weapons in our spiritual arsenal.

*"I wait quietly before God,
for my victory comes from Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will never be shaken."* Psalm 62:1-2

David then emphasises again:
*"Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
for my hope is in Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.
My victory and honour come from God alone.
He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.
O my people, trust in Him at all times.
Pour out your heart to Him,
for God is our refuge."* Psalm 62:5-8

This is an important point that David is trying to get across.

David was a man of action too. He was an excellent planner and an outstanding warrior. He'd learnt to wait for deliverance in his own life, and knew that deliverance does indeed eventually come. The frustrating, annoying, pivotal piece of the puzzle, that often seemed to be

malfunctioning, was the timing of the help. Deliverance can never turn up fast enough! That doesn't just apply to David, but to us as well. However, until the Lord has worked in the background to accomplish the best possible outcome, wait, we will. It's the only way.

We have to trust God. He knows what He's doing.

This is a song that David wrote for pilgrims who would be visiting the new temple in Jerusalem, once Solomon had built it. Again, he is emphasising the need for letting God be in control: not people. It puts things into perspective. God sees every aspect of every trial we face, whereas we only see one side. Leaving the decision making to Him is a wise move.

*"LORD, my heart is not proud;
my eyes are not haughty.
I don't concern myself with matters too great
or too awesome for me to grasp.
Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself,
like a weaned child who no longer cries for its mother's milk.
Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me." Psalm 131:2-3*

So if you feel that the Lord is telling you to be still, or if you need to be at peace in a long waiting period, here are practical suggestions on how to wait in stillness.

- ✦ Don't retaliate verbally, or in kind, (whatever the offence was.)
- ✦ Don't dive into any decision you don't feel a peace about, especially if an answer is debt.
- ✦ Stop frequent panic praying. You'll just stress yourself more, trying to force an answer.
- ✦ Go do something mindless, e.g. a household job. Sometimes answers come when you're focussed on something else and not fretting.
- ✦ God will act in His time, not yours. Be prepared for a long wait. Things may need to click into place behind the scenes (spiritually, or in other's lives,) and you can't force or control that.
- ✦ Be prepared for a surprise, as often the answer God gives you doesn't look like you thought it would; it will be better.
- ✦ Don't try and bargain with God to get an answer. E.g. "If I donate to that cause, would you please?" Whether it's money, devotion or work you're willing to give, God is not a vending machine. You cannot put something in, then expect something out.
- ✦ Resort to praise when stressing out. Put on your worship music and sing, as David did.

Battles the Lord won / engineered for Isra'el.

- ✦ Crossing the Red Sea - Exodus 14
- ✦ Victory over the Amalekites - Exodus 17:8-16
- ✦ Promise to fight for the people - Exodus 23:27-31 and Deuteronomy 7:7-8
- ✦ Jordan River dry crossing - Joshua 3:15-16
- ✦ Fall of Jericho - Joshua 6:20-21
- ✦ Ai - Joshua 8
- ✦ Amonites - Joshua 10:11
- ✦ North captured for Isra'el - Joshua 11:16-20, especially verse 23
- ✦ South captured for Isra'el - Joshua 10:40-42
- ✦ Deborah and Barak - Judges 4:14-15
- ✦ Gideon - Judges 7
- ✦ Samson - Judges 16, especially verse 30
- ✦ Ark of the Covenant against the Philistines - 1 Samuel 7
- ✦ Jonathan against the Philistines - 1 Samuel 14
- ✦ David and Eleazar son of Dodai - 2 Samuel 23
- ✦ David and Shammah son of Agee - 2 Samuel 23
- ✦ Rescue of Judah under the leadership of the righteous king Hezekiah - 2 Kings 19

- ✦ Don't let anything convince you that a lack of an immediate answer means that God hasn't heard you, isn't acting on your behalf or doesn't love you.
- ✦ In the meantime, list what you are grateful for and go do something small to bless someone else. It will take the focus off you.

Remember that it's alright to get upset when waiting for an answer. The Word of God encourages us to show God our emotions, and you wouldn't be human if you didn't feel scared, hurt or worried. [Ref. Lamentations 2:19 and 1 Peter 5:7] It can be frustrating; David suffered the same way. Just let stress lead you back to dependence on God, not into taking matters into your own hands and blaming the Lord.

*Lyric source: "Songs in the Night" by Matt Redman, off his album, Unbroken Praise
Words and Music by Jason Ingram, Jonas Myrin, Matt Redman © 2015



Coming Near to God: King David's Habit of Genuine Worship

I have heard it said many times, that when we worship God, it does more for us, than it does for Him. Worship reminds us of the goodness and provision of the Lord. It fosters gratitude, and importantly it makes us feel good. Don't you notice that? After you've sung to the Lord with all your heart, you feel great.

I heard this from so many sources, of course, I thought it was true. Then when I started to study the Psalms, I kept seeing how David poured his heart out before the Lord and I got a horrible feeling in the pit of my stomach. While worship makes us feel good, worshipping to make us feel better is most probably offensive to the Lord and is not an act of worship at all.



I can feel good singing along with the songs on the radio that have a positive message, and an upbeat tune. The human mind and body respond well to music. It is used in therapy, for relaxation, to rally and motivate: it has many benefits. I had been intending to do research on the power of music, then relate it to David's life. I wanted to nail how it helped him cope through the darkest times. Then the Holy Spirit said, *"I don't want that."*

I stopped, surprised. I couldn't pinpoint why the Lord had said no. Then I realised the answer: to pull worship apart and attribute positive, healing properties to it, would cheapen David's expression of his love of the Lord.

Around 2001, a song came out which is obviously a response to the Lord challenging us on how we use worship. Were we worshipping to get a happiness boost? Were we using it to create atmosphere in church? Or were we singing to pour our hearts out to the Lord, as David did? Whatever the intention of writing the song at the time, it reaffirms what I am learning about worship now.

*When the music fades,
All is stripped away,
And I simply come.
Longing just to bring,
Something that's of worth,
That will bless Your heart.*

That is what worship has to be: a gift of love and gratitude to the Lord. If that is tainted by anything else, it's not genuine worship; it's strange fire and the Lord shouldn't be expected to accept it.

Leviticus 10:1-3 *"Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu put coals of fire in their incense burners and sprinkled incense over them. In this way, they disobeyed the LORD by burning before Him the wrong kind of fire, (or strange fire), different than He had commanded. So fire blazed forth from the LORD's presence and burned them up, and they died there before the LORD.*

*Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD meant when He said,
'I will display My Holiness
through those who come near Me.
I will display My Glory
before all the people.'"
And Aaron was silent."*

I feel awful for Aaron when I read that story. The shock and sense of injustice he felt at the loss of his sons, must have been horrific. However, a point was made which still stands today. We know how to worship God. It must come from our hearts, from a living, dynamic relationship with Him. To offer God anything else, whether it be via duty, performance, or going through the motions because we're at the singing part of a church service, is not to worship. It is unrighteous, strange fire, that shows that we did not go near the Lord.

Listen to what motivated David to sing:

*"Because of your unfailing love, I can enter your house;
I will worship at your Temple with deepest awe." Psalm 5:7*

*"But I trust in Your unfailing love.
I will rejoice because You have rescued me.
I will sing to the LORD
because He is good to me." Psalm 13:5-6*

*"Praise the LORD!
For He has heard my cry for mercy.
The LORD is my strength and shield.
I trust Him with all my heart.
He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy.
I burst out in songs of thanksgiving." Psalm 28:6-7*

*"I will be glad and rejoice in Your unfailing love,
for You have seen my troubles,
and You care about the anguish of my soul." Psalm 31:7*



David sang out of a living, thriving relationship with the Lord. It came out of love. You can see the intimacy he had with the Father, come through. *"My heart has heard You say, "Come and talk with Me." And my heart responds, "LORD, I am coming."* Psalm 27:8

There are also other aspects to David's praise, which point the way to how we are to worship.

1. In many Psalms, David proclaims an intention to praise the Lord, especially when life was tough. Regardless of how he felt, he didn't slack off in his devotion to bless the Lord.

Examples of this are found in Psalm 5:7, Psalm 7:17, Psalm 13:5-6, Psalm 18:49-50, Psalm 22:22-25, Psalm 26:12, Psalm 28:6-6, Psalm 31:7, Psalm 35:9-10 and again in verse 28, Psalm 42:8, Psalm 54:6, Psalm 52:9, Psalm 57:7-8, Psalm 59:16, Psalm 61:8, Psalm 63:11, Psalm 69:30-31, Psalm 71:14-16, Psalm 71:22-24, Psalm 86:12-13, and Psalm 109:30-31.

There is a reason why I listed them all. **David's intention is a long-term, deliberate habit.**

2. Many Psalms are also prayers. I chuckle when I see theologians try and dissect the Psalms and place them into one specific category. As David pours out his heart, he bounces around many areas. His beautiful works are natural, which is why we relate to and value them. They are not contrived.

A small selection of Psalms where **David spontaneously bursts into exclamations of praise** include: Psalm 28:6, Psalm 21:1-2, Psalm 24:8, Psalm 35:10, Psalm 57:7-11, Psalm 63:2-8, Psalm 31:19-21 and Psalm 30:11-12. Again, I am listing more than a key example or two, to demonstrate his worship habits.



"Come and listen, all you who fear God,
and I will tell you what He did for me.
I cried out to Him for help,
Praising Him as I spoke
If I had not confessed the sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
But God did listen!
He paid attention to my prayer.
Praise God, who did not ignore my prayer
or withdraw His unfailing love from me."

Psalm 66:16-20

The King David Project: <http://cateartios.wix.com/kingdavidproject>

3. This final area sets an example for us. David frequently encourages others to shout for joy and praise the Lord. He wants to be an example, or as we say, a witness, and he wants to infect others with the same gratitude and desire for communion with the Lord that he has. We need to do the same. Some of these Psalms were written as a means of teaching people about the Lord.

A few examples of these exhortations are found in Psalm 32:10-11, Psalm 33:1-5, Psalm 29:1-2 and Psalm 66:1-4.



Serving Through Suffering... With the Joy of King David

*"O Lord, You alone are my hope.
I've trusted You, O LORD, from childhood.
Yes, You have been with me from birth;
from my mother's womb You have cared for me.
No wonder I am always praising You!
My life is an example to many,
because you have been my strength and protection.
That is why I can never stop praising You;
I declare Your glory all day long.
And now, in my old age, don't set me aside.
Don't abandon me when my strength is failing."
Psalm 71:5-9*

I would love to be able to say this now, let alone in my later years, when my health is failing. This is part of Psalm 71, written when David was elderly and very ill. It still shows his strength of purpose and character, as if he was still the young David, ready to take on the world. If you read the full Psalm, as his health fails, his competition is keen on killing him to take hold of power. Despite the challenges of pain and an aged body, he is determined to remain the victor, sitting securely within God's will.

*"Now that I am old and grey,
do not abandon me, O God.
Let me proclaim Your power to this new generation,
Your mighty miracles to all who come after me.
Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the highest heavens.
You have done such wonderful things.
Who can compare with You, O God?
You have allowed me to suffer much hardship,
but You will restore me to life again
and lift me up from the depths of the earth.
You will restore me to even greater honour
and comfort me once again." Verses 18-21*



One of the most inspiring talks I have heard on David, was by an elderly Rabbi, who was encouraging his congregation to "serve with the joy of King David!" He spoke about moving through our spiritual lives with love and a smile on our face; as well as the gratitude which manifested in David's Psalms. The point to his message, was that those in the world with no faith would see that joy, and it would become a witness.

Every so often I think about what he said, and I can see the promise in it. Being able to praise God through hardship, blesses God, helps empower us to move forward and also, shows others the goodness of God in our lives. If we had nothing at all to be happy about, we would not praise. Onlookers can see that.

David had a great deal to be grateful for, and he let nothing stop him from sharing it.

"As for me, I will always have hope;

I will praise You more and more.

My mouth will tell of Your righteous deeds,

of Your saving acts all day long—

though I know not, how to relate them all." Psalm 71:14-15 (NIV)

You know how it feels to be ill. Your energy is drained, you don't want to move. How David survived so many foes, battles and long-term health problems, is an incredible testimony of the provision of the Lord. He did not **die until the nation of Israel was secure. From the symptoms described in the books of Samuel and the Psalms, it appears that David suffered from diabetes from mid-life; then he most probably passed away from diabetic heart disease. Both explain the extreme cold he suffered in his last few years, [Ref. 1 Kings 1] and the ups and downs in his health, that the Bible records.

David had the help of a local plant named sharp varthemia (chiliadenus iphionoides) to control his diabetes, but I cannot begin to image living through those conditions with not so much as a paracetamol tablet, let alone insulin and cardiac medication. In addition, as someone who had been a warrior for many years, he would have suffered chronic pain and possibly, some debilitation, from orthopaedic problems caused by the extreme wear and tear of warfare on his body.

The aged David must have been very uncomfortable, yet, he didn't slow down much. Even when King Solomon had taken the throne, David invested his time in his great passion: preparations for building the temple. Reading through 1 Chronicles, they were extensive and David gave his personal wealth to help fund the building, inspiring others to give as well. [Ref. 1 Chronicles chapters 27 to 29]

"Then David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly:

"O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, may You be praised forever and ever! Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is Yours, O LORD, and this is Your kingdom. We adore You as the One who is over all things. Wealth and honour come from You alone, for You rule over everything. Power and might are in Your Hand, and at Your discretion people are made great and given strength." 1 Chronicles 29:10-12

The suffering that David went through, only served to build his gratitude and enhance his relationship with the Lord, which is something that I find amazing. At times, people who have had hard lives become bitter, both with others and with

Was King David

Diabetic?

Symptoms can include:

- Being more thirsty than usual;
- passing more urine;
- feeling tired and lethargic; (2 Samuel 21:15-17, Psalm 6:2, Psalm 31:9 and 38:10)
- slow-healing wounds; (Psalm 31 and 38, causing people to avoid him. Psalm 38 mentions infection.)
- itching and skin infections, particularly around the genitals; (Psalm 38:7)
- blurred vision; (Mentioned in Psalm 38)
- nausea and vomiting; (This could, perhaps, explain his being bent over in pain.)
- weight loss; (Psalm 31:9 and 102:5 which is also an unmarked Psalm of David whose wording matches Psalm 6.)
- mood swings. (These could have accompanied diabetic heart disease and his mood is obvious in Psalms 6, 41, 30, 31, 38, 55.)

Psalms 6 and 69 also mention unrelenting pain which would accompany David's symptoms (and possibly could also be caused by wear and tear plus the injuries he incurred on the battlefields); and in Psalm 41 he indicates that he has been on his sickbed again. So the Psalms that tell of illness are Psalm 6, 30, 38, 41 and 55; plus 102 talks about sickness coming upon him in midlife, which are consistent with diabetes. There is also evidence that he had diabetic heart disease.

God, but not David. He was able to look back and see the wonder of how the Lord had bought him through.

Psalms 119:71-71, is believed to be David's work. In it he says:

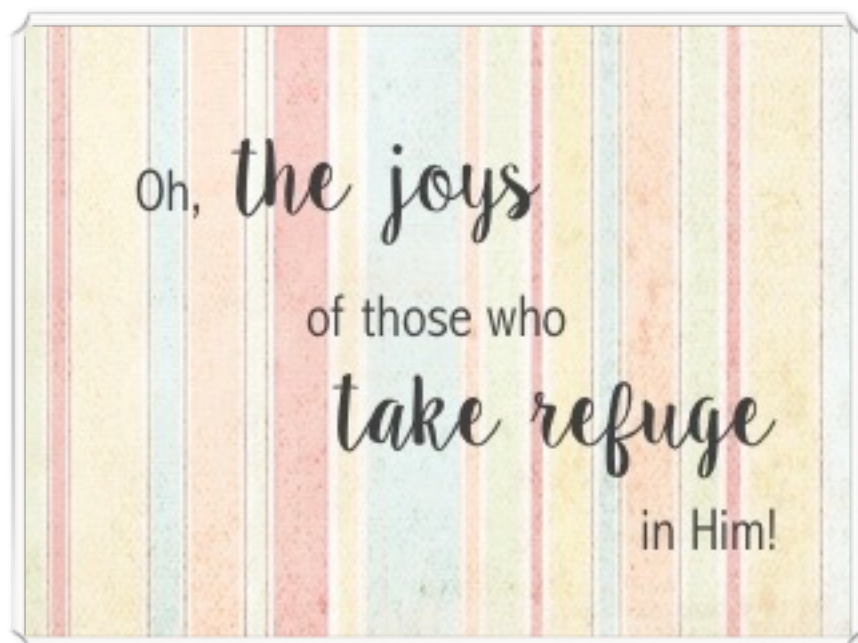
*"My suffering was good for me,
for it taught me to pay attention to Your decrees.
Your instructions are more valuable to me
than millions in gold and silver."*

Bless the Lord for the work and legacy of his faithful servant, David, the sweet singer of Isra'el. He is a great example of how to meet hardship head on, and still come out rich and fulfilled, no matter what age you are, or what conditions you suffer from. As I know David would say if he were to be writing this, put your trust and hope in the Lord. He will never abandon those who are faithful to Him. Look to Him for help, you'll never be unloved, unprovided for or forsaken.

Notes:

***"He (David) reigned over Israel for forty years, seven of them in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. He died at a ripe old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth, and honour. Then his son Solomon ruled in his place." 1 Chronicles 29:27-28* Long life, or being full of years, is a sign of the favour of the Lord. Other Biblical heroes who enjoyed the same favour, in those terms, are Abraham, Isaac and Job.

Read more about King David and diabetes: <http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=32037>



Obedience That Hurts

I love the promise of Psalm 37:3-4:
*"Trust in the LORD and do good.
Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.
Take delight in the LORD,
and He will give you your heart's desires."*

This is a beautiful verse which I have read and heard mentioned many, many times. It's good news for any of us who have dreams, and are hoping for the will of God to prevail, so that we may achieve that thing which we want so dearly.



David had one great dream which he poured everything he had into: he wanted to build a temple to house the Presence of God and the Ark of the Covenant. 1 Chronicles 22:5 tells us that David said, *"...the Temple to be built for the LORD must be a magnificent structure, famous and glorious throughout the world, I will begin making preparations for it now."* So David collected vast amounts of building materials before his death."

He also sorted out the rosters and duties of the priests and temple musicians and in 1 Chronicles 29:3-5, David gives his personal wealth to his dream. *"And now, because of my devotion to the Temple of my God, I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the construction. This is in addition to the building materials I have already collected for his holy Temple. I am donating more than 112 tons of gold from Ophir and 262 tons of refined silver to be used for overlaying the walls of the buildings and for the other gold and silver work to be done by the craftsmen. Now then, who will follow my example and give offerings to the LORD today?"*

If you want something in life, you need to be prepared to give. You must sacrifice, stay true to your vision and invest your time and energy in hard work, regardless of what obstacles you face. Success is achieved by effort, faithful devotion to the Lord and consistently pressing forward. In the end, it's worth it.

But what if you never get to see your dream fulfilled? What if you are not allowed to see your dream fulfilled and have to pass it onto someone else? This is what happened to David.



In 2 Samuel 7, God accepts David's desire to build Him a house and establishes a covenant with David which will lead to the birth of the Messiah, Jesus, who comes from David's line. That is a massive promise, which overwhelmed David. He would not have understood the full implications, but he certainly understood how much God was honouring him. But despite how much he pleased the Lord, and no matter how great his desire was to have Yahweh worshipped in a manner befitting to his God, this happened: *"But the LORD said to me, 'You have killed many men in the battles you have fought. And*

Additional Scriptures:

"Then David sent for his son Solomon and instructed him to build a Temple for the LORD, the God of Israel. "My son, I wanted to build a Temple to honour the name of the LORD my God," David told him. "But the LORD said to me, 'You have killed many men in the battles you have fought. And since you have shed so much blood in my sight, you will not be the one to build a Temple to honour my name. But you will have a son who will be a man of peace. I will give him peace with his enemies in all the surrounding lands. His name will be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel during his reign. He is the one who will build a Temple to honour my name. He will be my son, and I will be his father. And I will secure the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.'

"Now, my son, may the LORD be with you and give you success as you follow his directions in building the Temple of the LORD your God. And may the LORD give you wisdom and understanding, that you may obey the Law of the LORD your God as you rule over Israel. For you will be successful if you carefully obey the decrees and regulations that the LORD gave to Israel through Moses. Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid or lose heart!" 1 Chronicles 22:6-13

since you have shed so much blood in My sight, you will not be the one to build a Temple to honour My Name." 2 Chronicles 22:8 It must have crushed David.

The amount of time it took David to plan, design and put all the materials aside for the temple was extensive, and demonstrates his absolute dedication to his dream. He worked on the temple down the the last detail, as shown in 1 Chronicles 28:11-19.

"Then David gave Solomon the plans for the Temple and its surroundings, including the entry room, the storerooms, the upstairs rooms, the inner rooms, and the inner sanctuary—which was the place of atonement. David also gave Solomon all the plans he had in mind for the courtyards of the LORD's Temple, the outside rooms, the treasuries, and the rooms for the gifts dedicated to the LORD. The king also gave Solomon the instructions concerning the work of the various divisions of priests and Levites in the Temple of the LORD. And he gave specifications for the items in the Temple that were to be used for worship.

David gave instructions regarding how much gold and silver should be used to make the items needed for service. He told Solomon the amount of gold needed for the gold lamp stands and lamps, and the amount of silver for the silver lamp stands and lamps, depending on how each would be used. He designated the amount of gold for the table on which the Bread of the Presence would be placed and the amount of silver for other tables.

David also designated the amount of gold for the solid gold meat hooks used to handle the sacrificial meat and for the basins, pitchers, and dishes, as well as the amount of silver for every dish. He designated the amount of refined gold for the altar of incense. Finally, he gave him a plan for the LORD's "chariot"—the gold cherubim whose wings were stretched out over the Ark of the LORD's Covenant. "Every part of this plan," David told Solomon, "was given to me in writing from the hand of the LORD."

This is one of the events in David's life which makes me stop and wonder how I would handle being in the same position. I would have a terrible time with it. I like to have a vision, but I like to see results. To be able to make preparations to that extent and not be able to even lay the foundation, would test my dedication to that vision to the maximum extent. David had bought the land at least a decade before he died. His offer to build the temple came a long time before that. It's not as if this was an idea he had late in life, when he was rich enough to throw it all together and didn't have to live with the restriction for long. This was a long-term disappointment, and perhaps a long term frustration.

When Nathan gives David God's response to his desire to build a temple in 2 Samuel 7, there is no mention of David being told he couldn't be the builder at that time. He must have found out afterwards, perhaps as he searched for land? Perhaps as he sought the Lord for guidance on what He desired? After rejoicing over God's acceptance of his gift and the making of the Davidic covenant, *"no, not you,"* must have been a painful shock. We don't know when this happened or how, but it certainly shows David's great love for the Lord that he continued on. When the temple was built he wouldn't be there to enjoy it, neither would he be there to gain any glory from it. (Though he was honoured by both God and man at that time. See 2 Chronicles chapters 5 to 7.)



What astounds me is that David obeyed, no matter how much it hurt. That is incredibly hard to do, especially for a King who is accustomed and entitled to be obeyed. He could have taken the egotistical route and done what he wanted, anyway; but David knew how to be humble. He accepted that no was no, and he stuck by the rules. That is not typical behaviour for many of us, let alone for a monarch.

This part of David's life is a lesson in how to deal with disappointment and how to stay faithful, no matter what. However, the aspect which stands out clearer to me than anything else, is how much David communicated with the Lord to put all the plans for the temple together. He would have spent many hours in prayer and waiting on God for guidance and that time would have been incredibly precious. That is the real lesson in this example of David's life: if you want to serve and honour God: invest everything you've got in the time you spend with Him.



PRAY FOR THE
PEACE
OF JERUSALEM
MAY THOSE WHO LOVE YOU
BE SECURE
PSALM 122:6
Timothy R. Ball

Turning Back the Darkness

*"You light a lamp for me.
The LORD, my God, lights up my darkness.
In Your strength I can crush an army;
with my God I can scale any wall.
God's way is perfect.
All the LORD's promises prove true.
He is a shield for all who look to Him for protection."* Psalm 18:28-30



Night is the worst time for any of us who are hurting. It is in the dark and quiet, when you can't sleep and long hours stretch out ahead, that every fear, hurt and discouraging thought you can muster, catches up with you.

I have had insomnia for years and when I am stressed, it becomes uncontrollable. I sometimes get out of bed and try and do something to distract myself; but then I pay in exhaustion the next day. Through most of my time in bed, I simply stew over everything that is wrong.

That is one very bad idea!

When studying the Psalms, I've noticed that David talks a lot about the night time. It's obvious that his troubles have kept him awake through many nights too, but there are a lot of positive Scriptures, which have me looking at the dark hours in a new way.

That time of quiet can be harnessed and used to build our relationship with the Lord. Instead of stewing, turn that rumination into praying. Then add the Word of God, and seek His company as you turn an awful time into fellowship. There is no guarantee this will generate an instant answer, but if it builds your walk with God into one which has some of the quality that David's had, this is time exceedingly well spent, which will bring you joy.

Here is David's approach to facing the night hours.

1. Search for correction, as well as healing, deliverance and direction.

*"Tremble and do not sin;
when you are on your beds,
search your hearts and be silent."* Psalm 4:4

*"You have tested my thoughts and examined my heart in the night.
You have scrutinised me and found nothing wrong.
I am determined not to sin in what I say."* Psalm 17:3

2. Reflect on the goodness of the Lord in your life. That can only lead to praise.

*"But each day the LORD pours His unfailing love upon me,
and through each night I sing His songs,
praying to God who gives me life."* Psalm 42:8

3. Meditate on the Word of God.

*"I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on You through the night." Psalm 63:6
"I will bless the LORD who guides me; even at night my heart instructs me." Psalm 16:7*



Kintsugi and Kings: Using the Blessing You've Been Given

The greatest contrast between King David and King Saul, is the way they responded to the Presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. It's not simply that David had more faith in God, or was more obedient; David strode out in front because when given access to God's Spirit, he grabbed that blessing with both hands, hung onto the Holy Spirit for dear life and made the most of the blessing he'd been given.

Only a handful of people in the Old Testament were granted the Presence of the Holy Spirit. Knowing this has had me scratching my head wondering what was up with Saul? We all invest in our relationship with God differently, however, if the Presence of God was so rare in Saul and David's time, why didn't Saul grab hold of His empowerment, as David did, and run with it? Why didn't he bother to develop his relationship with God in such a desperate time?



Many men have resisted the prompting of the Lord with devout stubbornness beyond logical reasoning. Saul was known for acting out of fear and desperation, from the earliest accounts of him hiding behind the baggage carts, wanting to avoid being made King. I believe that fear was the main reason why he didn't build and benefit from his link to the Lord. Later, the pride that came with the position of Kingship and the successes could have added to that problem. Saul was willing to fall into despair rather than overcome. He didn't reach out to the Lord for what He needed, so God was never allowed to help and guide him. He became a cracked, broken pot which had to be discarded, rather than lovingly repaired.

There is a Japanese method for repairing broken pottery called kintsugi. One blogger aptly called it, *"the art of embracing damage."* This is pretty much what David did, instead of crumbling when he felt broken, then recoiling in fear, David surveyed the damage and allowed God's Spirit to beautifully repair him. He didn't give up as the challenges that faced him were too hard, and the dangers too great: he prayed, praised and fasted his way through. David allowed the Lord to pick up the pieces, and he never stopped doing this.

A short, simple definition of kintsugi can be found on Wikipedia:

"Kintsugi (金継ぎ?, きんつぎ, "golden joinery"), also known as Kintsukuroi, "golden repair," is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum, a method similar to the maki-e technique. As a philosophy, it treats breakage and repair as part of the history of an object, rather than something to disguise... As a philosophy, kintsugi can be seen to have similarities to the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi, an embracing of the flawed or imperfect. Japanese aesthetics values marks of wear by the use of an object. This can be seen as a rationale for keeping an object around even after it has broken and as a justification of kintsugi itself, highlighting the cracks and repairs as simply an event in the life of an object rather than allowing its service to end at the time of its damage or breakage." [Source: Wikipedia <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kintsugi>]

When allowed, God is the greatest kintsugi Master. He will repair even hairline cracks with the most beautiful materials and intricate craftsmanship; and unless we deliberately chip away at His

repair, it will hold. He did this with David so many times and we can still see and are encouraged by the delicate streams of gold which run through David's life.

Whenever trouble overwhelmed David, he went to God for the answer and built more strength into his relationship with God each time he did this. When God didn't answer immediately, David never stopped hammering on His door until he got the response he needed, no matter what. He did not resort to killing to make himself feel secure. He did not go against his moral or spiritual beliefs to deal with his enemies: he knew he had the Spirit of the Lord and he actively built that relationship and because that link became strong, it was able to hold him up, even when he was so sick he should have died.

There is a very simple lesson in this: when God gives you an opportunity to rely on His Spirit, use it! Build on that relationship, use His power and guidance and give it everything you've got!



Tea bowl, Korea, Joseon dynasty, 16th century AD, Mishima-hakeme type, buncheong ware, stoneware with white engobe and translucent, greenish-gray glaze, gold lacquer - Ethnological Museum, Berlin.

How Gentle Kings Become Killers

It can be very hard to comprehend how gentle, kind people who love God, can pick up a sword and wipe out opposing nations. This is one of the issues I see people battle with in studying the life of King David. While we are introduced to him in 1 Samuel as a brave young warrior, a mighty man of valour, this image seems to harshly contradict the Psalms and our understanding of him as a God-fearing, righteous ruler. This article will look at why and how David had to act as he did.

As I write this, we live in an age of religious and ethnic tolerance and those values have been perpetuated with the spread of Christianity throughout the world. It is morally imperative that we don't put people to the sword just because we don't believe in the same god. So why did David do it and how should we interpret his behaviour?



In David's time, God's kingdom of Isra'el did not live in safety. There were constant threats of invasion, being taken as slaves, robbery, rape and murder. God raised up a man after His own heart, David, to lead the people to safety and ensure that they followed Him, the one true God. [Ref. 1 Kings 11:34, 2 Samuel 5:12 and Judges 2:2-3]

For Isra'el to be safe, the surrounding nations had to be brought under control. This was predominantly due to their polytheistic lifestyles, which continually poisoned the spiritual lives of the people of Isra'el. The references which repeatedly advise, implore and demand that the Israelites resist and get rid of these gods are many and include, from Deuteronomy alone: 7:16 and 25-26; 12:2-7 and 29-32; 20:17-18; 28:13-14; 29:16-21. This is not an exhaustive list. Following other gods would lead the people to destruction and the Lord did not want that to happen. Why?

Yahweh is known as a jealous God, but He is so for protective reasons. This is a point in history where religious tolerance just doesn't apply and if there were religions carrying out these practices today, tolerance would not apply now either. Throughout every culture, if you study standards of morality, there are some practices which are intolerable, regardless of nation, year, race or religious creed. These include murder, prostitution and harming others. Sadly, these neighbouring religions demanded obedience to rituals which involved all those elements.

Here are the worst offenders:

- Ba'al: a fertility and war god, who demanded self-mutilation, ecstatic shamanistic like dances, ritual sex (which in cults that exist now, is often abusive and non-consensual, which may have been the case then also,) and child sacrifice.
- Asherah: the poles for this goddess are frequently mentioned in the books of Kings. She was considered the consort to Yahweh as Isra'el later dived into a spiritual abyss. Prostitution was a part of her worship.
- Ashtoreth or Astarte: she was an agricultural and fertility goddess who had a close association with Ba'el and again, ritual prostitution was involved in obeying and appeasing her.

- Molech: he was represented as an ox or calf, and he required the sacrifice of live, young children by burning and ritual sex practices.
- Chemosh: he was a war god who delighted in human sacrifice.

Realise that the people conceded to these demands, as they were terrified of the consequences of disobeying their god/goddess. Would you like people who followed these practices living next to you and having any influence on your children? My guess is that you said no.

In Deuteronomy 31, God told Moses before he died, that Isra'el would eventually break the covenant they had made to obey God and worship Him alone. Moses was given warnings and a song to teach the people, in order to make them realise that God knew what was about to happen: but God wasn't going to see it happen without a fight.

The warnings are dire and repeated and they needed to be. Psychologists have carried out studies to find out why people don't meet their goals, and what they need to accomplish tasks to improve their quality of life. The research has found that if you show people the probable pitfalls and their chance of failure, rather than simply pumping them up with "you can do it, you will win" messages, people are more likely to achieve what they want as their outlook is more realistic. If you know you can fail, you don't slacken off.

Thus the Lord told and told and told Isra'el, and David went to great lengths to ensure the physical and spiritual safety of the nation. After David died, his son Solomon began the path to total spiritual destruction and the exile of Isra'el, by marrying women from these dangerous nations, who worshipped these forbidden gods. In succeeding generations, first born children were sacrificed, the sexual immorality in Isra'el was overwhelming and the city of Jerusalem was so corrupt, the Spirit of God left the temple. [Ref. Ezekiel 10]

But still, even knowing this would happen, the Lord tried repeatedly to save His people. It is an act of a loving God which is incredibly precious and beyond price.

So now that you know why it happened, how can a good man kill to get a job like that done? This applies not only to David, but all the entire army of Isra'el.

When people are seen as a threat, fear kicks in and this motivation will enable people to do what they would otherwise consider unthinkable. When a threat is that close, people kill to survive. Consider Leviticus 6, where the Lord points out the punishment for disobedience. The people knew that they could lose everything. (Please see the footnote below.)

There are two other dynamics which will turn a sweet guy into a killer. As a crowd loses its individuality in a mass of faces, it becomes easy to dispatch or enslave them. They are not known by name, fame, or family ties and therefore, the guilt that murder and violence causes is significantly reduced for each soldier. It would be diminished even further, as the army acted under the orders of King David and General Joab, son of Zeruiah, David's sister. If a figure of authority orders an act of violence or immorality, then research has found that people are far

The Heart of a King

There are recorded incidences where David's kindness was evident in how he treated people who were of lesser status than he was.

- Abiathar, 1 Samuel 22:20-23

- Barzillai 2 Samuel 19:-

- Rizpah 2 Samuel 21:10-14

- Ittai 2 Samuel 15:16-23

- Mephibosheth 2 Samuel 9:1-12 and 2 Samuel 19:24-39

- Mercy to Shimei 2 Samuel 19:19-21

more likely to carry it out and they don't fret about repercussions as much. It is the commander who will get the moral blame, not them. This is termed moral disengagement.

The last point which would affected the behaviour of David and his army is the old rule of 'an eye for an eye.' [Ref. Deuteronomy 19:21] In the Old Testament there was no known final judgement of the sinner and the saint. It was believed that for whatever you did wrong, you had to be punished for in life, not the afterlife; therefore rough vengeance was enacted through acts of war like this. It was the standard for the people at that point in history, and this law was common throughout all the ancient world, even up until the successful dominion of Babylon. Through the laws that God handed down through Moses, this was ratified as legally correct behaviour. God had said in Deuteronomy 9:4 *"Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you."* This verse implies that if David was successful in defeating those nations, it was because God had judged them as wicked and He enabled their defeat. God was acting on His own laws.



If you would like to read more to further understand David's actions as a ruler and the intricacies of power in the ancient world, you are welcome to read these articles.

- Was King David a Megalomaniac?

<http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=32067>

- Does Absolute Power Absolutely Corrupt?

<http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=32731>

- Law and Disorder in the Life of King David

<http://articles.faithwriters.com/reprint-article-details.php?article=32070>



What the Torah Taught David About the Love of God

It's not easy to keep your faith level high while experiencing this kind of chaotic stress:

"O LORD, how long will You forget me? Forever?

How long will You look the other way?

*How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul,
with sorrow in my heart every day?*

How long will my enemy have the upper hand?

Turn and answer me, O LORD my God!

Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I will die.

Don't let my enemies gloat, saying, "We have defeated him!"

Don't let them rejoice at my downfall.

But I trust in Your unfailing love.

I will rejoice because You have rescued me.

I will sing to the LORD

because He is good to me." Psalm 13

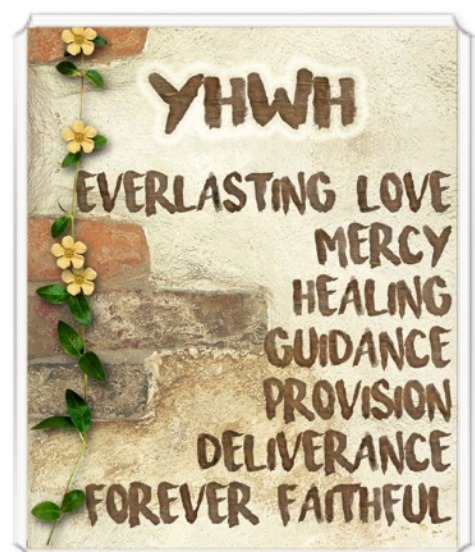
Like all of us, David struggled with his relationship with the Lord when the heat was turned up. Through a haze of stress and fear, he wondered where the Lord had gotten to. At times, as was the culture of the era, he took God's silence as possible rejection and fretted over what would become of him. Had he been judged as so sinful that God had walked away? Thankfully, his problems always end with God's hoped for deliverance arriving, and a deeper, richer understanding of God's love and character.

David didn't have the entire Old Testament and the New Testament to teach him what we know about God. All he had was the written laws of Moses and the stories of Isra'el's history (Torah), yet he had an incredible, dynamic faith that has stood the test of time as a powerful example to others. So without Jesus as the prime example, how did he know about the full character of God?

I have made the mistake of thinking of the Torah as a historical reference. Until I began to write this article, I hadn't properly looked at what those books tell us about the character of God. I prefer to read about the love and gentleness of Jesus, rather than about battles and plagues. I enjoy reading Paul's letters: *"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Romans 8:35-39.

As I began to search for clues about God's character in the Torah, I Googled Scriptures about the love of God. The Open Bible.info gave me a list of 59, with only one coming from the Torah. [Ref. Exodus 19:5] With the exception of a few Psalms, which were written by David so they don't count, the rest of the love Scriptures came into being well after David's time. They are the ones I am familiar with and rely on, so no wonder I hadn't dug back further.[https://www.openbible.info/topics/gods_love_for_us]

The answer is God's loving kindness has been repeatedly, clearly displayed since Genesis 1. The Torah is as rich in references to God's amazing love as the New Testament. Here are some examples:



- Despite the catastrophe, God physically looked after Adam and Eve after they had sinned. [Ref. Genesis 3:21]

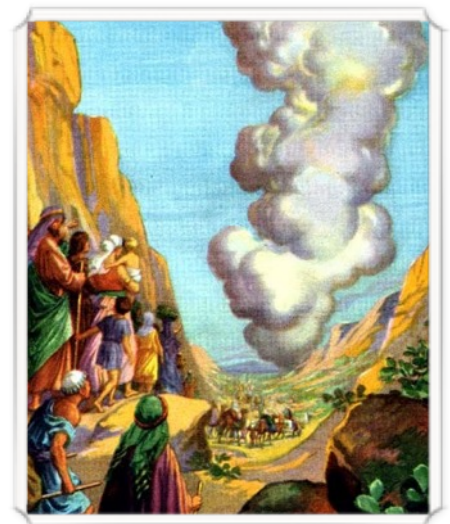
- Noah was saved from the flood and God made a covenant with him, because God's people are too important to be left behind. [Ref. Genesis chapters 6-9]

- Abraham was a friend of God. He was saved from being childless and "God had blessed him in every way," by the time he was an old man. [Ref. Genesis 12-24]

- God dried tears and generously provided basic needs in life for his people, such as **wives** and He reversed **barrenness** in faithful women such as Rebecca, in Genesis 25. God's kindness to a grieving **Hagar** is another beautiful picture of compassion combined with a practical solution. [Ref. Genesis 21]

- The deliverance and blessing of **Joseph** speaks volumes about God's kindness and guard, not to mention his plan for us as individuals. No matter how awful life got, he never left Joseph down on his luck for long. [Ref. Genesis 37-50]

- In ***Exodus**, God delivered Isra'el from Egypt because He heard their pain. In the wilderness they were supplied with every spiritual and physical need, despite their rebellion, and they were promised that God would delight in them. [Ref. Deuteronomy 30:9-10] This includes food, water, healing, ****conquering their enemies miraculously multiple times, being physically present with them and more.** Even the ten commandments are loving safety guidelines for a people who'd been subject only to pagan gods and rituals, and needed to learn how to live better lives. [Ref. Exodus 20] Deuteronomy 4:31: *"For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which he confirmed to them by oath."*



- In Leviticus 26:1-13 God promises to **live among** His people and walk among them. He isn't in Heaven looking down, He lived and moved alongside man. At this time in history, every other nation was trying to placate their gods, who they were terrified of.

- **Moses'** close friendship with God is a beautiful example of God's willingness to form a bond with His people. This is highlighted in Exodus 33:33:12-23. In Exodus 34:5-7, God describes Himself to Moses including, *"I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations."*

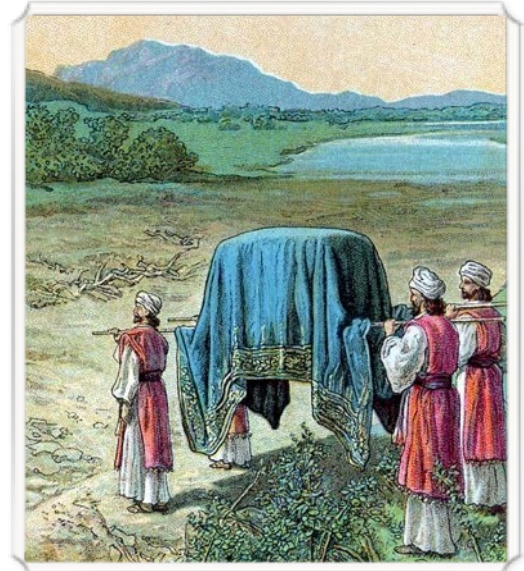
- God's patience is shown in the book of **Judges** again and again, and again, as Isra'el repeatedly rebels. In Deuteronomy 28, God sets out the curses of disobedience and gives the people five massive, staged warnings to turn back to Him; then even when they have completely rejected God and have been torn away from their birthright, He says, *"But despite all this, I will not utterly reject or despise them while they are in exile in the land of their enemies. I will not cancel my covenant with them by wiping them out, for I am the LORD their God. For their sakes I will remember my ancient covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of all the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD."* Leviticus 26:44-45 and Deuteronomy 4:29-31 *"But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the Lord your God and obey Him. For the*

Lord your God is a merciful God; He will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which He confirmed to them by oath."

As I said above, this is not an exhaustive list. How can David have known all these stories and not known the love of God? He can't and he didn't.

*"Remember, O LORD, your compassion and unfailing love,
which you have shown from long ages past." Psalm 25:6*

*"Let all that I am praise the LORD;
with my whole heart, I will praise His holy name.
Let all that I am praise the LORD;
may I never forget the good things He does for me.
He forgives all my sins
and heals all my diseases.
He redeems me from death
and crowns me with love and tender mercies.
He fills my life with good things.
My youth is renewed like the eagle's!
...He does not punish us for all our sins;
He does not deal harshly with us, as we deserve.
For His unfailing love toward those who fear Him
is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth.
He has removed our sins as far from us
as the east is from the west." Psalm 103:1-5 and 10-12*



That Psalm repeats the entire message of the Torah, which is that God was in an active, covenant relationship with His people which He will never discard. That relationship is still not complete and never will be. God will always fight for and provide for His people with a fierce, jealous love and David knew he was wanted, treasured, provided for and sought after; the problems with his walk with God only showed up... when his judgement was smothered by pain.

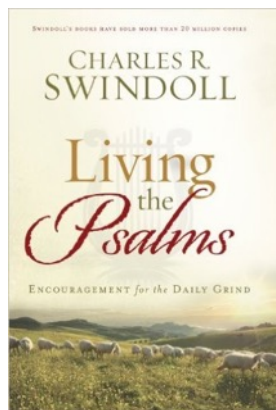
So next time you feel discouraged, or like God has abandoned you, don't beat yourself up over your lack of faith. We all go through it, including spiritual giants like David. Fear and grief take over and dominate our thoughts, and we don't reason straight. However, like David, we will also get through it. He always has been there for His people and He is not about to leave us now, no matter what...

Notes:

**Exodus 19:1-6: "On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."*



David and Spiritual Maturity



“Lead me in Your righteousness because of my foes.” I was reading Charles Swindoll’s “Living the Psalms,” when that sentence bought me to a dead halt. I don’t know about you, but I don’t talk like that. I’d say, “Lord guide me;” or “please strengthen me so I don’t become want revenge;” but I’d never think to ask straight up for righteousness.

Righteousness was a good choice. David got straight to the heart of everything he needed by using that word. It’s another example of the exemplary spiritual maturity that he showed from a surprisingly young age. I am well over double the age David was when he dealt with Saul’s attacks in a wise way, and I can’t hold a candle to his example. I would be trying to fight my way out of that situation, rather than maintaining my innocence to stay clean before the Lord. It takes more self-control to do that, than I possess.

Spiritual maturity is hard to quantify: it’s not static. It is not something that is gained which stays at a minimum fixed level; rather it’s a process of becoming holy, balanced and responsible. It affects the totality of how you react, think and feel and you can lose it all, or parts of it. When David sinned with Bathsheba and killed Uriah for convenience, he ignored the moral part of his maturity for a time, even though he was still mature in other areas. That incident is a reminder that we all have to work hard to keep our heads on straight. We never arrive with no danger of backsliding.

Spiritual maturity (and growth) are not accumulatively achieved as a result of ageing. It comes through surviving tough life experiences and hard work. A working definition of spiritual maturity covers an extensive number of areas and behaviours in life, and I see many of them in David. (This definition list is by no means exhaustive.)

- ✦ Uncompromising obedience to the Lord;
- ✦ God alone becomes your primary resource of strength, wisdom and guidance;
- ✦ you act and serve other people in love, not out of obligation, or seeking reward;
- ✦ you bring peace rather than create strife or problems, and settle disputes wisely;
- ✦ your pride is well on the way to dead; plus you don’t focus on your achievements publicly;
- ✦ you respond to your failures and sins with repentance and a desire to please God, picking yourself up off the floor, determined to do better (teachable and humble);
- ✦ you desire God’s correction and are willing to make adjustments to your thinking and behaviour;
- ✦ regardless of what hits you in life, you push forwards with hope, praising God;
- ✦ your attitude and faith are a catalyst which strengthens other people’s faith;
- ✦ you don’t treat God as a needs-delivering vending machine, but instead respond to Him with joy, trust and the positive expectation that He is there for you, whether you can feel that or not;
- ✦ you build your relationship with the Lord daily, without prompting, or because you’re desperate;



- ✦ you have tamed your tongue and are not caught up in appearances;
- ✦ you do not act out of vengeance or judgement, but with the fruit of the Spirit;
- ✦ you give all credit to God, or other people as appropriate, never yourself;
- ✦ you care for the elderly, sick and disadvantaged in the community without doing so because you feel motivated by guilt or duty;
- ✦ you're kind, generous, loyal and dependable;
- ✦ you can be trusted to be moderate in dangerous areas, such as in the use of power, alcohol and sex...

... or to put it very succinctly, you have learned that God is in charge, where you stand in Him and you continuously lose your selfishness in order to follow and obey Him.

The rewards of seeking spiritual maturity are greater joy, peace, hope and stability. You cope with the ups and downs of life better, find more fulfilment in the path the Lord is leading you down and have an enriching, dynamic relationship with Him, which will pull you through any havoc that life can throw at you. That makes the process of slowly killing off your selfishness to become mature worth it. It is a long learning curve which is never easy, but the benefits make every moment of sacrifice undeniably worthwhile.



Author

"From Despair to Deliverance: the King David Project," is a non-profit ministry, that seeks to make the life of King David easy to understand and relevant, so that believers gain inspiration and comfort from the life of King David. The project is run by Cate Russell-Cole, a Christian writer from Brisbane, Australia.

- ✎ The Project web site: <http://cateartios.wix.com/kingdavidproject>
- ✎ Masada Rain Blog: <https://masadarain.wordpress.com>
- ✎ Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/fromdespairtodeliverance>
- ✎ Cate on Twitter: @octopusreinked
- ✎ Cate on Faithwriters: <http://www.faithwriters.com/member-profile.php?id=67511>
- ✎ Pinterest Image and Inspiration Boards: <https://au.pinterest.com/MasadaRain/>
- ✎ The Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/@cateartios>

Project Bibliography (Informal), containing books, software, web sites and articles accessed.
<https://masadarain.wordpress.com/project-bibliography/>



Copyright Notice

The King David Project by Cate Russell-Cole is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0).
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

Except for the archaeological images which have come from the Louvre and Wikimedia Commons, all other images used in this document are purchased stock photos. It is ILLEGAL for you to take and use them, whether for yourself, commercially or for a non-profit venture such as a church or Bible Study. If you have not bought these photos from the source, the stock photography company has every right to sue you.

Photographs credited © Musée du Louvre / [etc.] are the exclusive property of the Musée du Louvre and are used by the Musée du Louvre with the permission of their authors or rights holders. Non-commercial re-use is authorised, provided the source and author are acknowledged.